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**PREPARATION FOR DEATH IN JESUIT ISTVÁN TARNÓCZY'S
BOOK *HOLTIG-VALÓ BARÁTSÁG*
[FRIENDSHIP THAT LASTS TILL DEATH]**

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Abstract: István Tarnóczy's collection of meditations and prayers, first published in 1680, subsequently saw more than ten editions. Its popularity was due to the timeliness of its subject matter. This Jesuit book of meditations contained prayers and meditations written for those seriously ill or preparing for death, while at the same time it worked as a kind of reference book for those assisting the suffering or the dying. In the concept of the time, the attainment of eternal happiness was largely due to a good death. The dying person had to learn the art of death (*ars moriendi*). This meant in the first place a thorough search of one's heart, penitence, persistent prayer, forgiveness of one's brethren, and a just last will. The role of the environment, of those who support the dying person with prayer, and may help his salvation after death by offering masses and saying prayers for his soul, is essential.

Keywords: preparation for death, assisting dying persons, collection of meditation, meditation, 17th century Jesuit meditation, 17th century piety literature.

István Tarnóczy¹ joined the Society of Jesus in Vienna in 1647. He studied philosophy in Graz in the period of 1651–1653.² He taught classes in rhetoric and poetics at Ungvár (Uzhhorod, present-day Ukraine). Later, he taught theology in Kassa (Košice, present-day Slovakia), Nagyszombat (Trnava, present-day Slovakia), Győr, and Klagenfurt.³ At Nagyszombat University he taught philosophy and theology. He was director of the colleges of Lőcse (Levoča, present-day Slovakia) and Győr. In his eulogy written at

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¹ István Tarnóczy (Nyitra [Nitra, present-day Slovakia], 1626 – Győr, 1689).

² WIX G., *Régi magyarországi szerzők. A kezdetektől 1700-ig*, [Early Hungarian authors. From the beginning until 1700], Budapest, 2008, 811.

³ PÉTER L. (ed.), *Új magyar irodalmi lexikon* [New Hungarian literary lexicon], III., Budapest, 1994, 2052.

Tarnóczy's death, the rector of Győr College emphasized his meekness, his piety, his care for poor students, and his patience in enduring his illness.⁴

Hungarian literary history has given little attention to the work of István Tarnóczy, whose books were published in Hungarian and Latin alike. His Hungarian writings mostly comprised works of piety, meditation, and theological treatises: *Menyben vezető Kalauz* (A guide leading to Heaven, Nagyszombat, 1675, RMK I. 1185.) a translation of the Italian Giovanni Bona's work *Manuductio ad caelum*; one year later, he published his prayer book, *Titkos értelmű Rosa* (A rose with a secret meaning, Nagyszombat, 1676, RMK I. 1206.); this was followed by the *Holtig-való barátság* (Friendship that lasts till death, Nagyszombat, s.a., RMK I. 1606.), analyzed hereby; then *Nagy mesterség a jó élet* (A good life is a great art, Nagyszombat, 1680, RMK I. 1252.), a translation of Roberto Bellarmino's *De arte bene moriendi*; three of his works published in Vienna, in 1685: *Jó akarat* (Good will, RMK I. 1325.), *Választott nyíl* (A chosen arrow, RMK I. 1326.), *Vigyázó Szem* (A watchful eye, RMK I. 1327.). He wished to familiarize his readers with the lives of Hungarian saints in Latin: *Idea Coronata Sive Vita S. Stephani primi Regis Et Apostoli Hungarorum* (Bécs (Vienna), 1680, RMK III. 3036.); *Princeps Angelicus, Sive Vita S. Emerici Ducis Hungariae* (Bécs, 1680, RMK III. 3037.); *Rex Admirabilis, Sive Vita S. Ladislai Regis Hungariae* (Bécs, 1681, RMK III. 3098.).⁵

Publication and antecedents

István Tarnóczy's collection of prayers and meditations entitled *Holtig-való barátság*⁶ was first published in Nagyszombat around 1680.⁷ It had ten more subsequent editions. The second edition appeared after Tarnóczy's death, in 1695. The six later editions in Nagyszombat (1707, 1722, 1735, 1741, 1754,

⁴ SZINNYEI J., *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [Life and works of Hungarian authors], XIII., Budapest, 1909, 1318.; KENYERES Á. (ed.), *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*, [Hungarian Lexicon of Biography], II., Budapest, 1967–1969, 825.

⁵ KÓNYA F., “‘Voluntas mea in ea’. Latin citátumok magyar fordítása Tarnóczy István Jó akarat című művében” [“Voluntas mea in ea”. Hungarian translation of Latin quotations in István Tarnóczy's work Jó akarat], in GÁBOR Cs., KORONDI Á. (eds.), *A fordítás kultúrája – szövegek és gyakorlatok* [The culture of translation – texts and practices] II., Kolozsvár, 2010, 85.

⁶ TARNÓCZY I., *Holtig-valo barátság. Avagy mi módon kellessék az beteg, és halálra vált embert, avagy meg-sentenciázot bűnöst segíteni* [Friendship that lasts till death. Or how to help an ill or dying man, or a sentenced sinner], Nagyszombat, n.d., RMK I. 1606.

⁷ Károly Szabó in the Régi Magyar Könyvtár bibliography of early Hungarian books mentions the period between 1680–1682. RMK I. 1606.

1773), as well as the work's publication in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, present-day Romania, 1769), Eger (1771), and Buda (1817) stand as evidence for its popularity in the 18th century. The repeated republication and popularity of the book betrays the necessities of practical life. In my paper, I wish to highlight the private and collective practice of piety in the 17th-18th century, with reference to Tarnóczy's bestseller.

The first edition of the *Holtig-való barátság* followed the author's translation of Bellarmino, another work of assistance for good death, probably only at a distance of one or two years. Tarnóczy published his Hungarian translation of Bellarmino's work *De arte bene moriendi*⁸ by the title *Nagy mesterség a jó élet* [A good life is a great art].⁹ The title was not chosen randomly. While the Latin version links by its title to the tradition of *ars moriendi*, the Hungarian translation refers to itself as the art of good living. Bellarmino's book is divided into two parts: the first is about the preparation for death, when it is still thought of as something distant (Tarnóczy calls it healthy state), teaching at the same time the art of good living; the second part focuses on the time when death is at hand (the time of illness when healing is no longer expected). The work stresses the idea that good death is the result of good life: "he who never lived badly, can never die badly: just like he who has always lived badly, will die badly" – writes Tarnóczy in the preface.¹⁰ The art of good living is based on the practice of good deeds (faith, hope, love, moderation, justice, piety, prayer, fasting, almsgiving), while the sacraments may help one lead a perfect life. It is important that death may not find one unprepared. Life according to the *ars vivendi* is the best way to prepare for an unexpected death. It is dangerous to postpone one's conversion until the last moment, because eventually there may not be time for it. Bellarmino emphasizes the importance of the daily examination of one's conscience, recommends the reading of the Scripture and other pious books, and at the same time he considers it salutary for the faithful to "order himself daily an hour-long meditation about the passion of Christ, or the four last things of man".¹¹ Remembering death may shake man up from his sinful state, and push him onto the road of conversion. Therefore the *ars moriendi* can often be understood also as an *ars vivendi*.

⁸ R. BELLARMINO, *De arte bene moriendi*, Roma, 1620.

⁹ TARNÓCZY I., *Nagy mesterség a jó élet*, Nagyszombat, 1679, RMK I. 1252.

¹⁰ "nem is halhat rosszszúl meg, a' ki soha rosszszúl nem élt: a' mint az is, a' ki mindenkör rosszszúl élt, rosszszúl hal-meg" TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, [A2 v]. All quotations of Hungarian texts translated by E.G. CZINTOS.

¹¹ "minden napra egy óráig-való elmélkedést rendel magának a' Christus kinszenvedéséről, avagy embernek négy végső dolgairól" TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, 249.

Who is the book addressed to?

The addressees of the *Holtig-való barátság*, as the subtitle mentions, are “the healthy and the sick”.¹² Tarnóczy’s preface is addressed to those “who watch the salvation of the souls of ill and dying people”: these are, besides the priest, pious lay people, relatives, or friends. The publisher mentions this latter group in the dedication of the second edition, when writing about how saleable the book is: “the people serving God-fearing, dying sick people could hardly get even some of their rags or dust”.¹³

The voluntary assistance of ill and dying persons became customary at the beginning of the 16th century.¹⁴ Tarnóczy considers that the service done around ill and dying people, striving to make their passage salutary, is a manful and sacred act. On one occasion he also mentions those who are not present by the side of the dying person, and recommends certain mediating prayers for them.¹⁵ The Latin language selection inserted between the dedication and the preface, entitled *Resolutiones morales*, and dealing with canon law issues connected to the administration of the sacraments (Penance, the Eucharist, and the Anointing of the Sick) and the course of rites, must have been intended for members of the clergy. They are mostly also the intended audience of the *Intések* [Admonitions] and directions intercalated between prayers and meditations. Advice for the sick can mainly be found in the first part of the book, but prayers and meditations for this group are to be found all over the book. The fifth chapter of the work assists the person sentenced to death in his preparation for dying. Such a concern of the works of piety for convicted people can be observed ever since Bellarmino’s writings; previously, in the Middle Ages, they were considered evil people, who undoubtedly go to hell after their death.¹⁶ Bellarmino claims that their execution is a penance for their sins; if they die with a repenting soul, they can be saved.

What is there to do?

Tarnóczy’s collection of prayers and meditations contains several admonitions which usually pay attention to the changes in the state of the ill or dying person, and formulate recommendations related to these. These guides

¹² “mind egészségesek, s’ mind betegek”

¹³ “még a’ rongyában, és porában-is alig kaphattak az Isten felő, és halálra vált betegeknek szolgáló emberek” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, [4th unnumbered page].

¹⁴ A. TENENTI, *Il senso della morte e l’amore della vita nem Rinascimento*, Torino, 1989, 328.

¹⁵ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, 164–167.

¹⁶ P. ARIES, *L’uomo e la morte dal medioevo a oggi*, Roma–Bari, 1980, 356.

most often advise the person or his entourage about prayers and meditations, but there are also some directions about proper conduct in the situation. In the preface, the author calls the priest's attention to the correct behaviour at visitation: his adequate preparation is a requirement, he must not only have comforting words for the ailing, but also for the relatives and friends around him.¹⁷ He very accurately describes the moment of arriving to the sick person's quarters: "he should begin sensibly, honourably greet those standing around, show compassion for the sick person, and ask him how he feels. Then raise and support him by comforting words (: but briefly:)." ¹⁸ Comforting is about reminding the ailing person that his suffering is not accidental, but it is from God, therefore it happens in the interest of his salvation, and it must be accepted with peaceful patience. The author calls for increased attention: if the patient wishes to say something, the priest should gladly listen to him.¹⁹ And when he is dying, "the priest should treat him sensibly, he should not burden him with words and cries, but seek that what is most necessary, that he absolves him, asking for a sign; that he might be absolved of his sins".²⁰ The admonitions connected to various rites are also addressed to the priest: what prayer or blessing he must say at (or for) the sick, when giving him the cross;²¹ when handing him the lit candle;²² when sprinkling holy water over him.²³ Besides urging for receiving the sacraments, the priest's task is also to remind the person of formulating a proper testament. If the ill person's state becomes serious, "he must warn him to make a proper testament, or Codicilus, as it is appropriate, and dispose of everything well, everything to where it belongs, his soul to God, who created it, his body to earth; his debts to his creditors, his children and relatives; alms to the poor."²⁴ In order to make a proper testament,

¹⁷ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, [15th unnumbered page].

¹⁸ "okosson kezdgyen hozzá, a' környül-állókat böcsülettel köszöncse, az betegen szánakodgyék, s'-kérge mint érzi magát. Az után vigasztaló szókkal (: de rövideden:) ébresze és gyámolitsa." TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, [15th -16th unnumbered page]

¹⁹ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, [16th unnumbered page]

²⁰ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 103.

²¹ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 68.

²² TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 103.

²³ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 106.

²⁴ "intse, hogy helyes Testamentomot, avagy Codicilust, a' mint annak a' módgya, tegyen, és azokat a' mi, kit illet, jól el rendellye, tudnia illik lölkét az Istennek, a' kitől teremtetett, testét a' földnek; a' mivel tartozik az adosoknak, az östül maradtott gyermekinek, atyafiainak; az alamisnát az Szegényeknek" TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, [17th unnumbered page]

the ill person must be asked whether he is not angry with somebody among his relatives, so that he might not be vengeful against them in his testament. The author considers that the priest has an important role in executing the last things, but he must do it in such a way that he does not interfere too much with personal matters. The priest's task is to remind the entourage of the deceased of the prayers uttered and masses commissioned for the salvation of the deceased, or the shortening of temporary suffering, while he himself does the same.²⁵

It has been thought ever since the Middle Ages that Satan tempts man the most on his deathbed, therefore the help of *friends and relatives* is very important.²⁶ Bellarmino thinks it is important that the dying person be surrounded by believers, whose prayer is liked by God and useful for the sick person.²⁷ The dying man mustn't be beguiled with free life and useless hopes. It is better if his state is not kept secret from him, but he is informed about it, so that he can prepare adequately for his death.²⁸ In his work entitled *Dispositorium moriendi* (1467), Giovanni Nider recommends to Dominican monks to loudly recite the Credo by the side of the dying man, and put a lit candle in his hand.²⁹

The *artes moriendi* usually offer help simultaneously to the individual's preparation for death, and serve as guidance for those who surround the dying person. The source of the first such works is considered to be Johannes Gerson's treatise entitled *De arte moriendi*³⁰ (1408).³¹ In the last two chapters

²⁵ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, 108.

²⁶ B.A. DOEBLER, "Continuity in the Art of Dying: The Duchess of Mafi", in *Comparative Drama*, 14 (1980), 205. The bed of the dying person began to be in the centre in iconographic representation from the 15th century. Besides the people standing around, the devils, demons, and saints, angels, and Virgin Mary are also represented on the two sides. ARIES, 119–123.

²⁷ TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, 464–465.

²⁸ MEDGYESI P., *Praxis pietatis, az az Kegyesség-Gyakorlás, Melyben bé-foglaltatik, mint kellyen az Keresztyén Embernek, Isten és a' maga igaz ismértiben nevedni, életét naponként az ő felelmére intézni, csendes lelki-ismérettel költeni, és futásának el-töltése után, bóldogul végezni*, [Praxis pietatis, or the practice of piety[...]], Bártfa [Bardejov, SK], 1640, 853. RMK I. 700.

²⁹ Cited by: TENENTI, 69–72.

³⁰ Complete title: *Opus tripartitum de praeceptis decalogi, de confessione, et de arte moriendi*.

³¹ D.F. DUCLOW, "Everyman and the Ars moriendi: Fifteenth-Century Ceremonies of Dying", in *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 6 (1983), 94–95. Others consider Anselm of Canterbury's *Admonitio morienti et de peccatis suis nimis formidanti* to be the first work of the genre. Cf. SZABÓ F., "Források kódexeink halál-szövegeihez", [Sources for texts on death in our codices], in *ItK* (1964), 681–690. 681.

of the work, a special role is given to the environment of the dying or deceased person. Their task is basically the same as those presented in the *Holtig-valoró barátság*: comforting, urging for receiving the sacraments, making a proper testament, and praying for them. The catechism-like series of questions on faith, which are supposed to be asked from the sick person, are still present at Gerson: whether he wants to die in true faith, wants to find penance, will improve his life if cured, will pay his debts, and will forgive those who sin against him.³² Protestants ask the same kind of questions of their dying believers: in Medgyesi's *Praxis pietatis*, in addition to dogmatic questions, the subjects of one's reconciliation with God and his own fellows (asking for forgiveness, forgiving) are also stressed.³³ In time, this kind of interrogative form disappeared, but the professing, the confession of faith, similar in its content, was still preserved in 17th century works preparing for death, as it also appears with Tarnóczy. The texts of the professions were often read to the patient by those present. This practice was also recommended by Bartolomeo d'Angelo at the beginning of the 17th century: these should be read aloud for the ill who can no longer speak, but who can still consider those heard in their hearts, and agree with the texts of the profession of faith.³⁴

In the *Holtig-valoró barátság* the admonitions for the environment usually urge for comforting the sick person and praying for his salvation. It is not proper to burden the ailing person with much reading and speech, writes Tarnóczy, it is more suitable to share some "salutary advice" with him. And if the patient "has turned completely to death", than he must be reminded of the anointing of the sick, "so that by this he might hope the curing of not only his soul, but also his body."³⁵ There are several prayers and litanies in the booklet which are supposed to be uttered by the surrounding people for the sick or the dying: for the five wounds of Christ, for the sick, Saint Bernard's litanies of Mary, the litany of the church for the joyful passage and the dedication of the passing soul, the litany of the name of God, etc. The prayer for the dying person might occasionally also serve the spiritual use of the praying person, since it may make him aware that he will also arrive at this point sometime, and he must give account of his life.³⁶

³² SZABÓ, 682.

³³ MEDGYESI, 854–858.

³⁴ B. D'ANGELO, *Ricordo del ben morire*, 1602, 234.

³⁵ "hogy ez által nem csak lelkének, de testének-is gyógyulását remélhesse" TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valoró barátság*, 15.

³⁶ MEDGYESI, 865.

Tarnóczy also offers various types of prayers for the convict (when he is tied up to be taken out; when he is taken to justice, and then taken back to his cell after the sentence), as well as directions for a humble behaviour (“When he is taken to justice, he must not look to and fro, but with his eyes cast down, as if he heard Pilate saying: Behold the man.”)³⁷ The priest’s task is to encourage the sinner to meditate on Christ’s suffering, then urge him to examine his conscience as the last preparations before the execution, absolve him of his sins, and make him kiss the cross while giving him the last blessing.³⁸ Then the priest should pray for the executed, and ask the bystanders to say a Lord’s Prayer and a Hail Mary for the salvation of his soul.

Prayer on the deathbed

The appropriation of the art of good dying was considered very important in the 16th-17th century, because it was believed that the eternal afterlife mostly depended on the person’s state at his death: “who dies as an enemy of God, will remain forever an enemy of God, and will be forced for eternal fire: and who dies as a friend of God, and inheritor of heaven, will never fall out of that glory”.³⁹ Thus our eternal happiness or misery depends on a good or bad death – concludes Tarnóczy’s translation of Bellarmino.

Examining the collection of prayers in the *Holtig-való barátság*, one may find evidence about the most frequently addressed saints and the content of the prayers. The addressees are most often: the three persons of the Holy Trinity (together or one by one), especially the suffering Christ. Among the saints, Virgin Mary’s intervention is most often required, followed by the other saints, patron saints, angels (guardian angels, Archangel Michael). The author recommends that if the patient’s state becomes more serious and it can be feared that he cannot confess before he dies, he should pray to Saint Barbara.⁴⁰

The prayers of the sick preparing for death most often beseech peaceful endurance, the acceptance of God’s will (“if you take my body and soul, you take not mine, but yours; therefore I commend my body and soul into your

³⁷ “A’ mikor Törvény eleibe állattyák, akkor ne nézzzen ide s’ tova, hanem levetett szemmel, mint ha azt hallaná Pilátustól: Ime az ember.” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, 171.

³⁸ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, 177.

³⁹ “a’ ki ugy hal-meg, mint Istennek ellensége, mindenkor Isten ellensége marad, és az örök tüzre köteles: a’ ki pedig ugy hal-meg mint Istennek baráttya, és menyországnak örököse, soha abból a’ dicsőségéből ki nem eshetik”. TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, 260.

⁴⁰ TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-való barátság*, 14.

hands, and I hail you for keeping it this long, and letting me borrow it.”),⁴¹ penance, a joyful passage, and salvation. Temptations are the strongest on the deathbed: “at the proximity of death the devil from hell is a mortal enemy of man, he forgets not himself, but as a lion looking for prey, hurries for the last fight, and schemes with all his power to shake man’s faith right in the first battle” – writes Tarnóczy, after Bellarmino.⁴² Therefore there are several prayers in the *Holtig-való barátság* in which the dying man asks for power against temptation, desperation, and the fear of death.

Tarnóczy publishes several prayers and meditations⁴³ in which the ill person prays while recalling the stations of Christ’s passion and his five wounds. The Saviour’s attitude to pain must serve as a model for all Christians, who must endure every hardship similar to Christ. The prayer to Christ’s passion [*Christus kin szenvedéséhez-való Imádság*] is such an example:

Oh my dear Jesus, who were born as a saviour to the world, circumcised, persecuted, mocked by the Jews, betrayed with a kiss by your disciple, tied-up, and like an innocent lamb, taken to the slaughterhouse, dragged from Annas to Caiaphas, from Pilate to Herod like a villain, falsely accused, spit, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, slapped in the face, beaten with reed, they covered your holy face, deprived you of your clothes, nailed you to the high cross, counted you among villains, made you drink vinegar and gall, pierced with a spear, in other words, you suffered terrible death for me and all people.⁴⁴

⁴¹ “ha testemet, és lelkemet el-veszed, nem enyimet, hanem Sajátodat veszed-el; Azért a’ te szent kezébe ajánlom testemet, lelkemet, és hálát adok néked, hogy eddig megtartottad, és kölcsön engetted.” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 20.

⁴² “az halálnak közel létekor a’ pokolbéli ördög embernek halálos ellensége, magát el-nem felelyti, hanem mint a’ praedára siető oroszlány az utolsó harczra siet, és minden tehetségével azon mesterkedik, hogy mindgyárt az első ütközetben hitiben megtántorítsa az embert”. TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, 399–400.

⁴³ E.g. Az olai-fák hegyén keseredet Christus Urunkhoz-való Imádság [Prayer to Christ our Lord tormented in the garden of Gethsemane]; Hét rövid Imádság a’ kereszt-fán függő Jesushoz [Seven short prayers to Christ hanging on the cross]; Christus kinszenvedéséről-való Litánia [Litany on Christ’s passion]; A’ Christus kin-szenvedéséről, hálá-adó emlékezet [Thanksgiving memory of Christ’s passion]; A’ Christus kin-szenvedéséről, ájtatos Imádság [Pious prayer on Christ’s passion]; Imádság A’ Christus öt Sebeihez [Prayer to the five wounds of Christ]; Isten, és ember közöt-való szüntelen emlékezet Avagy Christus Urunk öt Sebeihez-való Imádságok [Eternal remembrance between God and man or prayers to the five wounds of Christ]; etc.

⁴⁴ “Oh édes Jesusom, ki a’ Világ váltságá-ért születettél, környül metéltetted, öldöztetted, a’ Sidoktól csufoltattál, Tanítványodtúl, csokkal el-arultattál, meg-kötöztetted, és mint, egy ártatlan bárány, mészár-székre vitetted, Annástol Kaifáshoz, Pilátustol, Herodes-hez

Knowing that the sick man “watches for almost all beats of the clock”,⁴⁵ in order to make this easier, Tarnóczy compiled an “artificial clock” made up of 12 or 24 parts, which connects the time of illness with Christ’s sacrifice by the memory of, and meditation on, the stations of his passion. At the same time, it also presents a similar “very nice way”, by which one can unite with the suffering of the ailing Christ:

Compare the time of your illness to the hours of Christ’s passion. Say this in time of night: Now I go with Christ to the garden of Gethsemane, to pray with him there, sweat with blood, and be arrested.

If the pain lasts all night, say this to yourself: This night with my Christ I shall be dragged from Annas to Caiaphas.

In the morning, you say: Now I go with my Lord to Pilate. *At nine or ten o’clock, you say:* now I am scourged with the Lord, and I shall occupy myself with the memory of it.

If pain gets to you at noon, you say: Now I want to go to the Golgotha, to be crucified with him.

At three o’clock, you say: Now I go with the Lord to die with him.⁴⁶

Testament

In the period discussed, one important instance of the preparation for death is to make one’s testament. Testaments provide an image about the mentality of the age regarding death, as well as funeral customs. Of the most recent research of 17th century Hungarian testament-writing practice, the

mint egy gonosz tévő hurczoltattál, hamissan vádoltattál, pökdöstettél, csufoltattál, meg-ostoroztattál, tövis koronával koronáztattál, arczul csapdostattál, náddal verettéttel szent orczádat bé-födözték, ruhádtul meg-fosztottak, a’ magas kereszt-fára fel szegeszték, latrok közzé számláltak, eczettel és epével itattak, láncsával által-verték, egy szóval én érettem, és minden ember-ért gyalázatos halált szenvettél.” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 28–29.

⁴⁵ “beteg az órának csak nem minden ütésére vigyáz” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 47.

⁴⁶ “A’ te betegségednek ideit hasonlícsd a’ Kristus kin-szenvedésének óráihoz. Ugy mint estvének idején mongyad: Most indulok a’ Christussal, az olai fák hegyére, hogy ottan véle imadkozzam, vérrel veréttékezzem, és meg fogattassam. Hogy ha a’ fáidalom egész etzakán tart, így szolly magadban: Ezen éjjele, az én Christusommal, Annástól Kaifashoz fogok hurczoltatni. Reggelre kelvén azt mondgyad: Most megyek az Urral Pilátushoz. Kilencz vagy tiz óra tájban mongyad: Most az Urral meg ostromoztatom és annak emlékezetiben foglalatoskodom. Ha az fájdalom ebédkor jön reád, mongyad: Most akarok az Urral a’ Cálvária hegyére menni, hogy véle meg feszíttessenem. Három óra tájban, mongyad: Most megyek az Urral hogy véle meg hallyak.” TARNÓCZY, *Holtig-valo barátság*, 46–47.

source-editing and analyses of József Horváth,⁴⁷ and the textual editions and studies of Gábor Németh⁴⁸ should be mentioned in the first place. While during the 17th century, oral testaments were still dominant, however, in the 18th century, with the increasing dissemination of literacy, written testaments became more and more prevalent.⁴⁹ The oral testaments were often noted down subsequently (based on the evidence of the witnesses), but it can be assumed that for their largest part they were never written. Most people made their testaments at home, in the presence of the official deputies and with their help, since usually they could only write their names (or not even that, signing only with a cross); however, it also happened, although less frequently, that they visited official places or persons for this reason. There is some evidence for testaments freely formulated by their authors, but the drawing up in writing was usually a notary's job, therefore it bore his style and way of thinking. Certain formulas became thus permanent, and repeatedly appeared in the testaments of a settlement with slight modifications.⁵⁰

For their decisive majority, the reasons for writing the testament were illness or old age (although precise years of age are very rarely mentioned), but the fear appearing in times of epidemics, the need to take care of one's family, the solution of an expected or already occurred family property dispute,⁵¹ or some other unforeseen event (death of someone close, going to war, etc.) could

⁴⁷ HORVÁTH J., "Temetkezési szokások kora újkori végrendeletek tükrében" [Funeral customs in the mirror of early modern testaments], in KISBÁN E. (ed.): *Parasztkultúra, populáris kultúra és a központi irányítás* [Peasant culture, popular culture, and central government], Budapest, 1994, 197–212; HORVÁTH J. *Győri végrendeletek a 17. századból (I–III.)*, [17th century testaments from Győr], Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Győr, 1995–1997.; HORVÁTH J., DOMINKOVITS P. (eds.), *17. századi Sopron vármegyei végrendeletek*, [17th century testaments from Sopron County], Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Sopron, 2001.; etc.

⁴⁸ NÉMETH G., *Gyöngyösi testamentumok és fassiólevelek, 1642-1710*, [Testaments from Gyöngyös], Heves Megyei Levéltár, Eger, 1991; NÉMETH G., *Nagyszombati testamentumok a XVI-XVII. századból*, [Testaments from Trnava from the 16th -17th century], Budapest 1995.

⁴⁹ SZÉKELY G., "A kecskeméti reformátusok végrendeletei a XVII-XVIII. századból" [Testaments of Calvinists from Kecskemét from the 17th - 18th century], in BÁRTH J. (ed.), *Cumania 24., A Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Múzeumi Szervezetének Évkönyve*, Kecskemét, 2009, 199–284, 205.

⁵⁰ HORVÁTH, *Temetkezési szokások*, 201.

⁵¹ Eölbey Ilona made her testament in Győr, in 1684, "Hogy azért jövődöben az én édes gyermekeim között valami pör patvar, visszavonyás avagy veszekedés ne következék" ["so that no dispute, quarrelling, or disagreement could be between my dear children in the future"], HORVÁTH, *Győri végrendeletek*, 147.

also motivate it.⁵² Prior to the mid-18th century, besides the division of the inheritance, the testament also contained a pious clause.⁵³ This so-called *pium legatum* (pious donation) meant in fact that part of the acquired goods were left to others than the legal heirs: usually the church. Donations to the church were of assistance to the employees, and also the church building, the schools, the hospital, and the poor. It also happened that donations were not only made for the local church, but also for the churches of nearby settlements, or even distant places of pilgrimage, or the ornamentation of famous saint's images or shrines. In addition to money, churches could also receive houses, shops, land, livestock, crops, or all kinds of movable goods as donations.⁵⁴

The motif of the earthly goods temporarily borrowed from God, the metaphor of stewardship known from the New Testament also appear in last wills: "about the goods that God has given me to keep as a good steward, I shall make such a testamentary disposition for my servants"⁵⁵; "[...] the few goods I have, which were given for me by God to be a good steward of [...]"⁵⁶ After giving away one's goods as inheritance, often some kind of commendation to divine will, or some kind of blessing follows: "After all these, wishing everything well for the Lord God, I commend all to the providence of God".⁵⁷

There is an admonition in the *Holtig-való barátság* with reference to the fact that the testament maker should leave his belongings to whom or what they belong: his soul to God, his body to dust, his wealth to his heirs. There are many examples of this formulation in contemporary testaments, as the first disposition before the enlisting of one's belongings. Such thoughts can be found in Catholic and Protestant testaments alike: "I commend my soul to the

⁵² Felsőbüki Nagy György referred to the King's order in 1663, when he had to go to war with the Turks. HORVÁTH, DOMINKOVITS, 55.

⁵³ TENENTI, 217.

⁵⁴ Pétör blacksmith's testament from 1669: "Elsőben hagiok Templom épületire Istenös jó indulatomból egi tavali borjút" ["First I leave for the church building a last year's calf out of my godly good will"], SZÉKELY, 220.

⁵⁵ "az minemü javait az Uristen sáfárságul kezem alá bocsátott, cselédim között azokról teszek ily testamentális dispositiot" Koós Szabó István's testamentary disposition from 1682. NÉMETH, *Gyöngyösi testamentumok*, 74.

⁵⁶ "[...]az mi kicsiny javacska-jim vadnak, mellyekre Istenemtől bizattattam volt sáfárul[...]" Anna Kovács's testament from 1692 quoted by SZÉKELY, 233.

⁵⁷ "Ennekutánna az Úr Istennek minden jót kívánván, ajánlok mindeneke az Úr Istennek gondviselése alá". Öreg Szabó Mihályné's testament from 1690. SZÉKELY, 211.

hands of the mighty God until my Christ the Saviour comes, and my body to where it originated from, to its mother, the black earth.”⁵⁸

One important part of testaments is the dispositions made for the funeral, and the order of the future divine services for the salvation of the deceased's soul, especially the insurance of their costs. Bellarmino draws attention in his work on good dying: “you act cleverly if you leave some part of your goods to the priests, so that they present divine sacrifice for your soul.”⁵⁹ According to the testaments, having masses celebrated for the deceased was a practice prevalent with the Catholics all over Hungary. These masses were usually celebrated on the anniversary of death or the funeral.

Summary

The popularity of the *Holtig-való barátság* in the 17th-18th century is a sign of the importance of preparation for death. Death is not merely a private business of the individual, but the community also undertakes an important role in comforting the dying person, and assisting to the salvation of his soul. Man must begin the preparation for good death while he is still healthy, because he who lives all his days as a good Christian must not fear sudden death, as he can stand prepared before the Judge at all times. In the light of the prayer book and testaments of the age, one can state that the 17th-18th-century individual accepted the suffering connected to old age and illnesses and passing itself as the will of God, regarded death as an organic part of life, and, being aware of its unavoidability, tried to prepare for it with prayers, meditations, receiving of sacraments, and with leaving testament of his earthly goods.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos

⁵⁸ “Ajánlom lelkemet az én megváltó Christusomnak eljöveteléig az hatalmas Istennek kezében, testemet viszontag az honnét eredetet vett volt, az ő anyjának, az fekete földnek”. The testament of Hegy Mihály's widow, 1645. NÉMETH, *Gyöngyösi testamentumok*, 32.

⁵⁹ “okossan cselekedsz, ha javaidnak valami részét a' Papoknak rendeled, hogy lelkedért áldozatot mutassanak az Istennek”. TARNÓCZY, *Nagy mesterség*, 342.